

**IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
FOR THE WESTERN DISTRICT OF TENNESSEE  
WESTERN DIVISION**

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IDA BOUNDS,

Plaintiff,

Case No. \_\_\_\_\_

v.

UNIVERSITY OF MEMPHIS,

Defendant.

**JURY DEMANDED**

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**COMPLAINT**

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COMES NOW Plaintiff, Ida Bounds, and brings this civil rights action against her former employer, the University of Memphis, pursuant to Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, 42 U.S.C. § 200e, *et seq.* (“Title VII”). As set forth herein, Plaintiff was subjected to unlawful employment practices by Defendant constituting disparate treatment and a hostile work environment based upon race and gender, and retaliation, all in violation of Title VII.

**I. PARTIES**

1. Plaintiff, Ida Bounds is a resident citizen of Shelby County, Tennessee and a former employee of Defendant.

2. Defendant University of Memphis is a public university located at 3720 Alumni Avenue, Memphis, Tennessee 38152 and is governed by a local board of trustees.

## II. JURISDICTION AND VENUE

3. The Court has jurisdiction over Plaintiff's discrimination and retaliation claims pursuant to 42 U.S.C. 2000e.

4. Venue is proper pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1391(b) and (c) in this Court as all parties can be found in this District and all the actions complained of herein took place in this District.

## III. STATEMENT OF FACTS

5. Plaintiff was hired by Defendant on or about September 3, 2014 as an administrative assistant (Level 1) to the Dean of the University of Memphis School of Law, Peter Letsou.

6. Throughout her employment with Defendant, Plaintiff has been rated as "Frequently Exceeds Position Requirements" in her job performance and was generally acknowledged by her peers and associates as capably and competently performing all aspects of her position.

7. Plaintiff is an African American female.

8. Peter Letsou is a white male.

9. Since she began her employment with Defendant, Plaintiff has been subject to discriminatory treatment, harassment and intimidation based upon her race and gender by Letsou and others at Letsou's direction.

10. Plaintiff filed an internal complaint of discrimination on the basis of her race and gender, naming Dean Letsou as a responsible management official, on September 15, 2016.

11. Plaintiff alleges that on nearly a daily basis, she was, *inter alia*,

- a. Verbally berated, yelled at, and physically intimidated by Letsou within the workplace in front of others;

- b. Subjected to false accusations and baseless rumors created by Letsou;
- c. Threatened on more than one occasion with termination by Letsou based upon false accusations and baseless rumors;
- d. Forced by Letsou to work outside her assigned role as administrative assistant for much of her tenure in that position; and
- e. Forced to assume the duties and responsibilities that belonged to a male, white employee. These additional duties and responsibilities were given without any commensurate increase in compensation and she was often required to work well into evenings to complete all of the tasks assigned to her.

12. Indeed, one incident of verbal assault and threatening harassment by Letsou, which occurred on December 5, 2016, was so severe that it made Plaintiff fear for her safety and contact police as well as the University's Office for Institutional Equity.

13. Plaintiff alleges that Letsou's actions constitute conduct so severe and pervasive as to alter the terms and conditions of her employment.

14. After filing the internal EEO complaint, the harassment and intimidation at her workplace intensified. Plaintiff's workload was substantially increased. Plaintiff was subjected to a baseless investigation into "workplace misconduct" used solely to harass and intimidate her. Further, Plaintiff was denied the opportunity to work on special projects, which had previously been approved.

15. Plaintiff filed a charge of discrimination with the Equal Employment Opportunities Commission ("EEOC") on May 13, 2017 alleging discrimination based upon her race and gender and retaliation. A true and correct copy of the charge is attached hereto as Exhibit A.

16. On or about May 26, 2017, Plaintiff submitted a Certification of Health Care Provider for Employee's Serious Health Condition, completed and executed by her physician in support of her application for protected leave under the Family and Medical Leave Act.

17. On or about May 30, 2017, Plaintiff was terminated by Letsou, citing poor performance as the stated reason.

18. Defendants stated reason for terminating Plaintiff's employment is pretext for its retaliatory motives.

19. On August 22, 2018, the EEOC issued a Notice of Suit Rights to Plaintiff. A true and correct copy of the Notice is attached hereto as Exhibit B.

20. Other similarly-situated individuals who have not participated in or voiced opposition to perceived discriminatory practices have been treated more favorably than Plaintiff.

21. But for Plaintiff's EEO activity, Defendant would not have taken the adverse employment actions against Plaintiff described herein.

22. Other similarly-situated non- African American individuals have been treated more favorably than Plaintiff.

23. Other similarly-situated male individuals have been treated more favorably than Plaintiff.

24. This action is timely filed.

25. Plaintiff has exhausted her administrative remedies.

#### IV. CAUSE OF ACTION – VIOLATIONS OF TITLE VII

26. Plaintiff incorporates the paragraphs above by reference as though specifically set forth herein.

27. Defendants actions constitute unlawful race discrimination, gender discrimination and retaliation in violation of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, 42 U.S.C. § 200e, et seq.

28. As a direct and proximate result of Defendant's intentional and unlawful conduct toward Plaintiff, Plaintiff has and continues to lose significant wages and benefits and has sustained other pecuniary loss. Plaintiff, as a direct result of Defendant's intentional and unlawful actions, has suffered damage to her professional career and professional reputation, as well as to her personal reputation. Further, Defendant's intentional and unlawful actions taken against Plaintiff have been demeaning to Plaintiff and have caused Plaintiff to suffer mental anguish, humiliation, and embarrassment, as well as emotional distress.

#### V. PRAYER FOR RELIEF

WHEREFORE, for the reasons set forth above, Plaintiff prays that the following relief be granted following a jury verdict in her favor:

1. An award of back pay, lost benefits, and other pecuniary losses proximately caused by Defendant's unlawful conduct;
2. Reinstatement;
3. Front pay and the value of future lost benefits if reinstatement is not feasible;
4. Compensatory damages for emotional distress, loss of enjoyment of life, humiliation and embarrassment caused by Defendants in an amount to be determined by the jury;
6. All costs, expenses, disbursements, pre-judgment interest, post-judgment interest, expert witness fees, and reasonable attorney's fees allowed under Title VII
7. A Declaration that Defendant's practices as complained of herein to be in violation of Title VII;
8. Injunctive relief;

9. A trial by jury; and
10. Such further legal and equitable relief as is deemed just and proper.

Respectfully Submitted,

/s/ James M. Allen

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